

In the Claims:

Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 12 are amended:

1. (Currently amended) An image processing system comprising:

an image processing unit for processing input ~~image~~
photograph images; and

an output unit for outputting an image processed in the
image processing unit;

wherein said image processing unit has a function of cutting
out a background portion of the photographic image and effecting
a color specification for said cut out background portion of the
image and further has a function of specifying a method of
processing the background portion, and when printing the
photographic image, said output unit recognizes the background
portion on basis of said color specification specified by said
image processing unit and carries out background processing for
the recognized background portion on basis of said specified
method of processing the background portion to replace the
background portion of the photographic image with a background
pattern ~~substantially lacking~~ adapted to be printed without
creating areas of perceptible unevenness, to avoid visual
unevenness from accruing in the background portion.

2. (Currently amended) An image processing system
according to claim 1, wherein said output unit converts pixels
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into the background pattern and replaces the background portion of the photographic imagery with a printed discontinuous pattern on basis of the specified method of processing the background portion.

3. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 2, wherein said discontinuous pattern is chosen from a group consisting of a stripe pattern and a dot pattern.

4. (original) An image processing system according to claim 1, wherein said color specification specifies a uniform density of a specific color.

5. (Currently amended) An image processing system comprising:

an image processing unit including:

means for replacing a background portion of ~~an a~~ a photographic image with a specified background design;

means for specifying a method of processing the background portion; and

means for transmitting information indicating said specified method of processing and said image with the background portion replaced by said specified background design; and

an output unit including:

means for receiving image data and information indicating a received method of processing the background portion;

means for recognizing a background portion by detecting said specified background design in said received image data;

means for carrying out background processing for the recognized background portion based on said received method of processing, generating processed image data replacing the specified background design with a background pattern; and

means for printing out said processed image data.

6. (previously presented) The system of claim 5 wherein the background design includes a color specification.

7. (Currently amended) An image processing method comprising the steps of:

replacing a background portion of ~~an~~ a photographic image with a specified background indicator design;

specifying a method of processing the background portion; and

transmitting the image with the background portion replaced by the specified background indicator design, and information indicating the specified method of processing the background portion; and

at an output unit:

receiving said image ~~data~~ with the background portion replaced by the specified background indicator design and information indicating the method of processing the background portion;

said output unit recognizing the background portion by detecting the specified background indicator design in the received image data; and

said output unit processing the recognized background portion according to the received method of processing to replace the background indicator design of the background portion with a background pattern capable of being printed substantially without unevenness perceptible to the human eye, to provide an output image that avoids visual unevenness from accruing in the background portion.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 7 wherein the background indicator design includes a color specification.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 7 wherein the step of processing the recognized background portion includes converting pixels of the background portion into a discontinuous pattern constituting the background pattern.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 7 wherein the background pattern is discontinuous.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the discontinuous background pattern is chosen from a group consisting of a striped pattern and a dotted pattern.

12. (Currently amended) An image processing system comprising:

an image processing unit; and
an output unit,
said image processing unit comprising
means for replacing the background portion of ~~an~~ a
photographic image by a specified background design,
means for specifying a method of processing the background
portion,
means for transmitting information indicating said specified
method of processing, and
said image with the background portion replaced by said
background design; and
said output unit comprising:
means for receiving image data and information indicating a
received method of processing the background portion,
means for recognizing a background portion by detecting said
specified background design in said received image data,
means for carrying out background processing for the
recognized background portion on basis of said received method of
processing, generating processed image data, and
means for printing out said processed image data.

13. (previously presented) An image processing system
according to claim 12, wherein said output unit converts pixels
into the background pattern and replaces the background portion

with a discontinuous pattern on basis of the specified method of processing the background portion.

14. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 13, wherein said discontinuous pattern is chosen from a group consisting of a stripe pattern and a dot pattern.

15. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 1, wherein said input image comprises a photograph image of a person.

16. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 15, wherein said image processing system thereby replaces a background portion of the photograph image of a person with a background suitable for identification photograph use.

17. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 5, wherein said image comprises a photograph image of a person.

18. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 17, wherein said image processing system thereby replaces a background portion of the photograph image of a person with a background suitable for identification photograph use.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 7 wherein the image comprises a photograph image of a person.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said method thereby accomplishes replacement of a background portion of the photograph image of a person with a background suitable for identification photograph use.

21. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 12, wherein said image comprises a photograph image of a person.

22. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 21, wherein said image processing system thereby replaces a background portion of the photograph image of a person with a background suitable for identification photograph use.

23. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 1, wherein said image processing unit recognizes the boundary between the image and the background portion of the image to define the background portion for cutting out.

24. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 5, wherein said means for replacing a background portion of an image with a specified background design recognizes the boundary between the image and the background

portion of the image to define the background portion for replacing.

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising, prior to said replacing a background portion of an image with a specified background indicator design, recognizing the boundary between the image and the background portion of the image to define the background portion for replacing.

26. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 12, wherein said means for replacing the background portion of an image by a specified background design further comprises recognizing the boundary between the image and the background portion of the image to define the background portion for replacing.